Sprucing Up an Old Favorite
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Sprucing Up an Old Favorite

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BY EMILIE SOMMER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Residents began moving into the Whitney in July, as work continued to convert the Bethesda Theatre into a venue for live shows. Nine townhouses and 244 apartments were added.

Now Playing at the Bethesda Theatre,
The Whitney Has 67 Floor Plans,
A Full-Time Staff and Front-Row Location

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Luxury Takes Over A Bethesda Landmark

By Anya F. Sostek
Special to The Washington Post

When they were growing up in Montgomery County in the 1960s and '70s, Dave Sislan and his friends would regularly hitchhike to the Bethesda Theatre to watch a movie before heading down the street to the Hot Shoppes for dinner.

In the '80s and '90s, Sislan also caught shows at the old movie house, drinking beer and eating nachos that were served to customers when the theater was known as the Cinema 'n Drafthouse, then the Bethesda Theatre Cafe.

Although the theater closed in 2001, Sislan, 48, now returns to the building every day—as a resident. In July, he became the first tenant to move into the Whitney at Bethesda Theatre, the luxury apartment complex that is nearly complete on top of the historic art deco theater. Although the complex won't be finished until January, most of the remaining construction is detail work.

The building complex, made up of 244 apartments and nine townhouses, also includes a restoration of the Bethesda Theatre that preserves the art deco look from the theater's opening in 1938. The venue is being converted for live performances and will open next fall for off-Broadway productions operated by Nederlander Worldwide. The Whitney, developed by the Bozzuto Group and Smith Payes, has been in the works since 1996 and includes separate private and public parking garages.

The Whitney contains three styles of apartment buildings: an 11-story urban tower on Wisconsin Avenue, four-story villas in the center of the complex and townhouses that slope down into a residential neighborhood behind the building. The buildings, more than 40 percent of which have been leased, frame a courtyard with patios, landscaped gardens and a swimming pool.

With 67 different floor plans, most apartments in the building do not look like their neighbors. A few apartments are particularly noteworthy. One of the penthouse villas has an 800-square-foot balcony patio, and two other apartments are double-levels, with windows just a few feet away from the theater's art deco marquee.

Sislan's apartment, like all others in the Whitney, has a full-size Maytag washer and dryer in the unit and maple cabinetry in the kitchen. Like many other apartments, his has floor-to-ceiling windows and a balcony. In July, Sislan moved into a one-bedroom on the fourth floor, because apartments on the upper floors were still under construction. In November, he moved into a two-bedroom apartment on the 10th floor that has two balconies and a fireplace. Some apartments in the building also have upgraded kitchen features, such as granite countertops and stainless-steel appliances.

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BY EMILIE SOMMER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Tenant Tori Hepburn likes the trade-offs at the upscale Whitney, whose staff eased her relocation from Milwaukee.

Such amenities do not come cheap. The smallest studio in the building costs $1,470, and some three-bedroom apartments and townhouses cost more than $4,000 per month. In addition to the base prices, residents pay additional monthly fees for various features. Each level above the second costs an additional $10 per month, for example, and monthly fees ranging from $15 to $75 are also assessed for fireplaces, balconies and views.

But for the residents of the Whitney, those prices are within reason for the level of service provided. "It's rather pricey, but the trade-off is worth it," said Tori Hepburn, who received a crystal bowl from Tiffany's as a gift from the staff in August, when she moved from Milwaukee. When she has had friends in town, Hepburn, 29, has relied on advice from the full-time concierge on hip restaurants and bars nearby.

When Hepburn fell while running in the rain, the staff helped her get to a hospital and brought her flow-

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Staff Includes a Full-Time Concierge

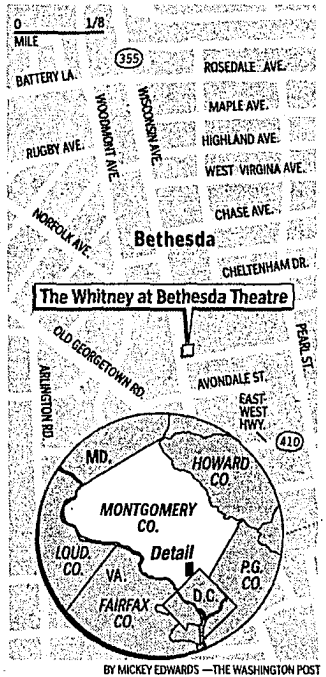
WHITNEY, *From Page 5*

ers after she came back with crutches and a cast. As she recovered from her knee sprain, the staff delivered her mail to her fourth-floor apartment almost every day. "Coming from Wisconsin and not knowing anyone, not having any family here, they really helped me feel comfortable and adjust to the new area," she said.

Even though the building has been under construction since residents moved in, tenants say that the staff has done an admirable job keeping noise down. The biggest grumble from residents seems to be that the pool wasn't open in time for use this summer.

Ryan Spiegel, 25, moved back to the Washington area in August after graduating from Stanford Law School. He looked at 15 apartment buildings in three days before choosing the Whitney. Because he works 70 to 90 hours a week as a first-year lawyer, Spiegel particularly appreciates the ability of the staff to handle apartment issues for him when he's not home.

He drops his dry cleaning off at the front desk when he needs clothes laundered, and the staff returns the clothes to his apartment when they're clean. They also handle deliveries of furniture and other packages. Spiegel hasn't had time to buy a car, but when he does he can use the car detailing service available to residents. It also says it is one of two apartment buildings in the country to offer electric high-speed Internet service, meaning that residents can just plug their computers into the wall to get online, without worrying about cable or telephone connections.



BY MICKEY EDWARDS —THE WASHINGTON POST

The centerpiece of the Whitney's lobby is the Montgomery room, a common room for residents and their guests decorated in warm shades of bronze. The room is particularly popular for the constantly replenished supply of chocolate chip cookies. The adjacent business center is used as much for its three computers as for its coffee machine, which also makes cappuccino and espresso.

One morning, Spiegel mentioned to property manager Kelly Jones that he always came close to spilling his coffee when his carpool picked him up, because the cups didn't have lids. Almost immediately, Jones called him at work to let him know that she had found lids for the cups.

Sislan said that it is easy to meet people in the building, because a high percentage of tenants take advantage of the fact that the building allows dogs (for a fee). "It's such an easy way to start a conversation," he said. "Dog people are fundamentally friendly, and it makes a huge difference for the sense of the building."

The Whitney's location also makes life easy. The building is on the same block as a CVS and across the street from a Safeway. The Bethesda Metro station is a block away, and many of Bethesda's bars and restaurants are within walking distance.

Next fall, when the Bethesda Theatre's transformation into a live-performance venue is complete, residents will be able to spend a night out without leaving the building. "The theater gives the building more character—a sense of being a landmark and a flavor of revivalism," said Spiegel. "It's going to be one of the central attractions of Bethesda."

THE WHITNEY AT BETHESDA THEATRE

7707 Wisconsin Ave.
Bethesda, Md. 20814
888-483-1958

- **APPLICATION FEE:** $25 per applicant
- **SECURITY DEPOSIT:** $250, refundable
- **MONTHLY FEES:** $10 per level; $25 for a fireplace; $15 to $45 for views; $25 to $75 for a balcony, sundeck or terrace.
- **UTILITIES:** Not included; each apartment has its own water heater and gas meter.
- **AMENITIES:** In-unit washer/dryer, swimming pool, fitness center, concierge, video rental, dry-cleaning, gift wrapping, car detailing, 24-hour maintenance.
- **PARKING:** $125 per month, $150 for assigned spaces.
- **PET POLICY:** $250 refundable deposit; $25 pet rent per month, pets must be under 35 pounds.

APARTMENT SIZE	QUANTITY	SQUARE FEET	MONTHLY RENTAL
Studio	18	531 to 651	$1,470 to $1,620
1 BR/1BA	14	613 to 931	$1,710 to $2,190
1 BR/1 BA/Den	25	914 to 982	$2,100 to $2,370
2 BR/2 BA	64	1,079 to 1,582	$2,400 to $3,040
2 BR/2 BA/Den	13	1,284 to 1,736	$2,625 to $3,895
3 BR/2 BA	10	1,471 to 1,886	$3,795 to $4,135
3-4 BR Townhouse	9	2,250 to 2,582	$4,110 to $4,630

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